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One of my most important priorities this Congress will be passing H.R. 952, the COMBAT (Compensation Owed for Mission Based Activities in Theatre) Act, to ensure adequate treatment and compensation for soldiers with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). For too long soldiers have returned from overseas battles, bearing mental and physical wounds, only to be forced to fight another war to get their benefits from the VA. Currently, veterans face an adversarial process when they seek treatment and compensation from the VA. This is especially true for soldiers who have PTSD. In the Iraq and Afghanistan wars alone, over 115,000 veterans have been diagnosed with PTSD. Tragically, however, only 53,000 have been granted service-connected disability for their condition.

This is true for past conflicts as well. The disability claims backlog at the VA is approaching one million, a great majority of which are Vietnam Veterans seeking compensation for PTSD. These facts are a clear indication that current regulations at the VA are too stringent for veterans seeking disability benefits.

As it currently stands, veterans have to "prove" the stressor that triggered their PTSD, even if they have already been diagnosed. They need to track down incident reports, buddy statements, present medals, and leap other hurdles to meet the threshold that VA mandates in order to receive desperately needed compensation.

The Combat Act lowers the burdensome threshold that veterans have to meet to receive compensation. Just as our military adapts and reforms its strategies in every war it fights, so must VA to assist the surviving heroes of those wars.

The bill would expand the definition of "combat with the enemy" in Title 38, USC to include active service in a theater of combat. This would essentially establish service in combat as the presumptive stressor for the incurrence of PTSD. The veteran would still need to be clinically diagnosed with PTSD, however, he or she would no longer need to "prove" the events that caused this diagnosis.

[COMBAT Act One Page Brief](#)

[Legislative Text of the COMBAT Act](#)

[American Legion Letter of Support](#)  
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\*\*\*The COMBAT Act has been endorsed by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), The American Legion, Veterans for Common Sense (VCS), National Legal Veterans Services Program (NVLSP), Ex Prisoners of War (Ex-POW), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Fleet Reserve Association (FRA), Veterans & Military Families for Progress, Military Officers Association of America (MOAA).

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